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1962/10/19

57. McCone, Memorandum for the File, "Memorandum of Meeting, Wednesday, October 17th, at 8:30 a.m., and again at 4:00 p.m.," 19 October 1962

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October 19, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILE

Memorandum of Meeting, Wednesday, October 17th, at 8:30 a.m., and again at 4:00 p.m., attended by Rusk, Ball (each part of the time) Martin, Johnson, McNamara, Gilpatric, Taylor, McCone, Bohlen, Thompson, Bundy, Sorenson, Dean Acheson (for a short time).

Note: The 4:00 o'clock meeting adjourned at about 7:00, and re-assembled at 10:00 p.m., in Secretary Ball's conference room, adjourning at 11:45 p.m.

on 17 October
Note: At 9:30 a.m., DCI went to see the President, then went to Gettysburg to see General Eisenhower.

The purpose of the discussion was to develop a plan of action in connection with Cuba, and the alternatives are summarized in my memorandum of October 18th addressed to USIB, copy of which is attached.

This memorandum will record views as they were expressed and developed throughout the meetings.

Ambassador Bohlen warned against any action against Cuba, particularly an air strike without warning, stating such would be divisive with all Allies and subject us to criticism throughout the world. He advocated writing both Khrushchev and Castro; if their response was negative or unsatisfactory then we should plan action; advise our principal allies, seek a two-thirds vote from the OAS and then act. The Attorney General and Bohlen exchanged views as to just what type of an answer we could expect from Khrushchev and what he might do if we threatened an attack. During this discussion Secretary Rusk seemed to favor asking Congress for a declaration of a state of war against Cuba and then proceed with OAS, NATO, etc., but always preserve flexibility as to the type of action. Bohlen consistently warned that world opinion would be against us if we carried out a military strike. Secretary Ball emphasized the importance of time, stating that if action was over quickly, the repercussions would not be too serious.

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The Attorney General raised the question of the attitude of Turkey, Italy, Western European countries, all of which have been "under the gun" for years, and would take the position that now that the U.S. has a few missiles in their backyard, they become hysterical. This point was discussed back and forth by various people throughout both days of discussion.

Secretary McNamara made the point that missiles in Cuba had no great military consequence because of the stalemate mentioned in my October 18th memorandum. General Taylor supported this view in the early parts of the discussion, but in the later meetings expressed increasing concern over the importance of the missile threat from Cuba. Gilpatric supported McNamara's position. McCone doubted it, stating that McNamara's facts were not new as they had appeared in estimates months ago (which McNamara questioned). Nevertheless, he and McCone felt that a complex of MRBMs and IRBMs in Cuba would have very important military significance. McNamara took issue claiming that the military equation would not be changed by the appearance of these missiles.

Bohlen and Thompson questioned the real purpose of the Soviet's actions in Cuba and seemed to feel that their acts may be in preparation for a confrontation with President Kennedy at which time they would seek to settle the entire subject of overseas bases as well as the Berlin question. McCone indicated this might be one of several objectives and undoubtedly would be the subject of discussion at the time of confrontation; however, McCone doubted that this was the prime purpose of such an elaborate and expensive installation as the Soviets were going forward with in Cuba. Bohlen seemed to favor precipitating talks, and was supported by Thompson.

SecDef and Taylor both objected to political talks because it would give time for threatening missiles to become operational and also give the Soviets an opportunity to camouflage the missiles. McCone presented most recent photographs and indicated CIA opinion that the first missiles will be operational within one or two weeks.

Bohlen again raised the question of opening up discussions. McNamara agreed that ~~was desirable~~ this would be desirable but emphasized the importance of developing sequence of events which would lead to military action.

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There followed an extensive discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of a military blockade, total or partial.

It was at this point that McNamara and Taylor presented their schedule of alternative military strikes, copy of which is attached, and which was the subject of continual discussion in the ensuing meetings.

Dean Acheson then expressed his views as follows:

We should proceed at once with the necessary military actions and should do no talking. The Soviets will react some place. We must expect this; take the consequences and manage the situations as they evolve. We should have no consultations with Khrushchev, Castro, or our allies, but should fully alert our allies in the most persuasive manner by high level people. This would include all NATO partners, and the OAS. The President should forget about the elections and should cancel all future campaign speeches.

As an alternate to military action, a plan was discussed involving a declaration of war and the creation of an all-out blockade. Thompson spoke strongly in favor of a blockade. General Taylor at this point indicated that he favored a blockade although in subsequent meetings he seemed inclined towards a military strike. McCone gave an intelligence estimate on the effects of a blockade, indicating its seriousness would depend upon how "hard" a blockade it turned out to be, and finally stated that the main objective of taking Cuba away from Castro had been lost and we have been overly consumed with the missile problem. McCone stated that we must all bear in mind that we have two objectives, one, disposing of the missile sites, and the other, getting rid of Castro's communism in the Western Hemisphere.

The meeting adjourned for dinner and in the evening Secretary Rusk came forward with the following plan.

The United States cannot accept operational MRBMs in Cuba. There is not much profit in preliminary exchanges with Khrushchev and Castro because the President has said that the establishment of

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Soviet bases and offensive weapons in the Western Hemisphere would raise serious problems and therefore on September 5th and 13th the President has in effect warned both Khrushchev and Castro.

would result

Rusk continued that more talks with Khrushchev/in extended parleys and therefore he recommended against such an approach. Rusk then proposed that we hold until the middle of next week and then follow the OD course No. 1 (52 sorties against MRBMs). Prior, we inform key allies probably on Tuesday (Macmillan, de Gaulle, Adenauer, possibly the Turks and a few Latin American Presidents). On Wednesday, we strike with missiles and simultaneously send a message to Khrushchev, NATO, OAS, etc. We should be alert for an attack on Turkey and be prepared for the consequences in Berlin, Quemoy, Matsu, Korea, etc. Rusk made the estimate that world opinion would go along, 42 allies would go along and some neutrals would be favorable. Latin Americans must be told that we are acting in the interests of the Western Hemisphere. Rusk advocated that the first step -- we take out the missiles and thus remove the immediate problem of the establishment of an offensive capability, but that we be prepared for subsequent steps. He emphasized the United States cannot accept missiles in our security interests and in view of statements made by the President and others and our various policy declarations. Bohlen continued to persist for diplomatic approach but Rusk and several others were not at this point persuaded. McNamara raised innumerable questions concerning military operations; the manner in which the strike could be properly covered with protective air and how it might be restricted and also the advisability of case one, as contrasted with case one, two and/or three.

Both Ambassador Thompson and Secretary Martin in discussing the Rusk proposal favored a blockade, coupled with a declaration of war.

General Taylor at this point spoke in favor of a military strike taking out the MRBMs and the planes as well, and was supported by McCone, who took the opportunity to cover the points set forth in "talking paper for principals, October 17, 1962", attached. Also during the course of these meetings, McCone reported to the group and later to the President the results of his discussions with General Eisenhower, as covered in the attached memorandum of October 17th, this subject.

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In addition to the attached papers, State tabled during the day's meetings the following:

- (a) Possible course of action (undated) in 14 pages.
- (b) Possible world consequences in military action, undated, 5 pages.
- (c) Political actions (undated) 4 pages.
- (d) Political actions in support of major military action (undated) 3 pages.

These were all referred to as State papers (draft) and some were revised the following day.

Also State tabled the following papers:

Limited one-time strike against MRBM sites, undated, 6 pages.
Plan of blockade (undated) 4 pages.

Paper labeled "Attack Three - Invasion" 5 pages with an attached scenario of 4 pages.

Possible Soviet Reactions to the following alternatives, C. E. Bohlen, October 17th, 2 pages.

Also, proposed letter to Khrushchev was tabled, paper dealing with probable Castro response to U.S. appeal and a proposed letter to Fidel Castro, marked "To Mr. F. C.", all included in State papers.

At the conclusion of the meetings which served the purpose of airing the views of all parties responsible for giving advice to the President, the alternatives open to us were summarized by the Attorney General and are covered in my memorandum to USIB, dated October 18th.

John A. McCone
Director

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